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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 003430

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MASS](#) [YM](#) [COUNTER](#) [TERRORISM](#)

SUBJECT: LTG WHITCOMB DISCUSSES MILITARY COOPERATION WITH
MOD, MOI

REF: A. SANAA 2487

[B](#). SANAA 2848

[C](#). SANAA 1037

Classified By: DCM Nabeel Khoury for reasons 1.4 b and d.

[1](#). (C). Summary. Visiting U.S. ARCENT Commander LTG Whitcomb met with the Ministers of Defense and Interior on November 29. Both Ministers expressed their gratitude for USG assistance in strengthening Yemen's ability to combat terrorism. LTG Whitcomb thanked the ROYG for its support in the GWOT and looked forward to increased cooperation between Yemeni and American security forces.

MOD: We're in for a Long Fight, Al-Houthi Still a Problem

[2](#). (C) Minister of Defense MG Abdullah Ali Aliwa expressed gratitude for USG assistance and looked forward to increased support, saying he anticipates the fight against terrorism will be "a long conflict." "We suffer from Al Qaeda just like you," he continued. Aliwa considered President Saleh's recent Washington visit to be "very positive" and promised to continue working with the Office of Military Cooperation (OMC) to develop a long-term strategic plan (ref A) for strengthening and modernizing the Yemeni armed forces.

[3](#). (C) In addition to combating groups like Al Qaeda, Aliwa stated that the military is also confronted with difficult internal security threats. He complained that the release of imprisoned supporters of slain rebel cleric Hussein Al-Houthi (ref B) presented "real problems" for the military as they immediately returned to fighting upon their release. (Note: President Saleh pardoned Al-Houthi supporters as part of the annual Ramadan amnesty release. The original intent of the amnesty was to undercut support for the insurgency. End Note).

[4](#). (C) LTG Whitcomb thanked Aliwa for his forces' support in the GWOT and commended YSOF's performance during the Al-Houthi conflict (ref C). He also looked forward to exploring new areas of cooperation between the U.S. and Yemeni armies through joint exercises and seminars. Aliwa was receptive to LTG Whitcomb's report that ARCENT is planning a Mountain Warfare Seminar with his staff that incorporates Operation Enduring Freedom lessons learned. LTG Whitcomb encouraged MOD to send a representative to a February 2006 Land Forces Symposium in Atlanta to discuss mutual regional security concerns, such as border security.

MOI: Building on Success

[5](#). (C) LTG Whitcomb also praised MOI's Central Security Force - Counter Terrorism Unit (CTU) for its operations during the Al-Houthi conflict. He explained that ARCENT's primary focus will be on increased cooperation with the Yemeni army, but wanted to explore ways to support MOI's "great successes" with the CTU and the Yemen Coast Guard. LTG Whitcomb stressed the importance of building upon success and integrating the CTU with regular military, regional and American forces, especially with regard to sharing intelligence.

[6](#). (C) Alimi also expressed his gratitude for USG assistance in establishing and developing the YCG and CTU, which even in their infancy have made valuable contributions to strengthening Yemen's borders and combating terrorism. He hoped to expand the CTU beyond its current 150 member size in order to adequately confront the "difficulties and complications" of combating terrorism in Yemen. Alimi also encouraged the USG to lean on Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to provide more bilateral aid and aggressively tackle terrorist financing flows into Yemen.

[7](#). (U) This cable was cleared by LTG Whitcomb.
Krajeski